

7 July 1955

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence

SUBJECT : Organizational Concept for Project AQUATONE

1. The Secretary of the Air Force in a memorandum to the Chief of Staff, dated 27 June 1955, stated he had reached the conclusion, on the basis of conversations with you, "that the operational phase of this project should be carried on as a joint task force operating between the Air Force and CIA". As yet, however, there is not a complete meeting of minds on what would be the most appropriate organizational concept within the Secretary's formula. This subject will presumably be the main topic at the meeting to be held in Colorado Springs on 9 July. Clear-cut decisions are now urgently required, and it is to be hoped that they can be arrived at on that occasion.

2. Partially or wholly inconsistent proposals have been advanced and positions taken as follows:

(a) The Deputy Chief of Staff, Operations, (in consultation, I believe, with the Deputy Chief of Staff, Development) has proposed that the general direction of the project be exercised by a jointly staffed headquarters which would, however, be under the control of the DCI, but that full operational responsibility be assigned to the Commander, Strategic Air Command. This plan would provide for three elements:

(1) A Project Headquarters under the full control of the DCI but jointly staffed and with an Air Force Officer as Deputy Project Officer;

(2) A small task force in the Air Force reporting to the Chief of Staff to maintain liaison with the Project Headquarters and to arrange for the provision of those types of support which could best be handled through Air Force Headquarters;

(3) A special operating organization designated the XXXth Air Division which would be established by and be under the operational control of the Commander, SAC.

USAF review(s) completed.

TS-103613 ✓

Copy 27 of 6

The XXXth Air Division would have its own headquarters (at a location to be recommended by the Commander, SAC) which would exercise direct command over the Field Detachments and the Test Base. It would be responsible for the execution of all operations subject to the general direction and control of the Project Headquarters.

(b) Prior to the submission of this proposal, the CIA submitted on 29 June an outline of suggested organizational arrangements intended to be in accordance with the memorandum from the Secretary of the Air Force referred to above. The CIA outline provided for a single joint task force to plan and conduct operations. The task force would consist of a Project Headquarters in Washington exercising direct command over the Test Base and the three overseas Field Detachments. It would be a fully integrated organization jointly staffed by CIA and the Air Force and include contractors personnel. The Senior Project Officer would be designated by the DCI; the Deputy Project Officer would be designated by the Air Force and would be the military commander of all Air Force personnel assigned to the task force. This organization would draw upon appropriate elements of both CIA and the Air Force for support. Within the Air Force the major support responsibility could be assigned to SAC or any other operational command, although the task force would look to certain elements of the Air Staff for specialized types of support more appropriately furnished by them.

(c) In the course of discussion of these and other proposals the Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Research and Development has expressed the view that the Air Staff should retain primary responsibility for Air Force support of, and participation in, this project. Although he did not formulate a detailed proposal, he suggested (as envisaged in the CIA outline summarized in subparagraph (b) above) that the project be carried out by a joint task force in which the Senior Project Officer would be designated by the DCI and the Deputy Project Officer would be an Air Force Officer who would also serve as military commander of the Air Force personnel assigned to the task force. This Air Force Officer would look to the Chief of Staff (or a designated Deputy Chief of Staff) for Air Force guidance in the conduct of the project. Support for the task force by various elements of the Air Force would be arranged through the appropriate Staff Offices and directorates.

3. The proposal of the Deputy Chief of Staff, Operations, outlined in paragraph 2 (a) above, raises sharply the question of what is meant by a "joint task force" and what the internal organization and lines of command within such a task force should be. Under the terms of that

-3-

proposal, the Air Force and CIA would jointly staff the field detachments and a headquarters staff in Washington but there would be interposed between these elements another operational headquarters which would in fact exercise command authority over all personnel in the field and over all actual operations. In effect, therefore, there would not be one joint task force but two; a jointly staffed planning group in Washington under full control of the DCI and a jointly staffed operating organization (the XXXth Air Division) under full control of the Commander, SAC, the former giving general direction to the latter. The XXXth Air Division would be under the command of one headquarters at Omaha yet subject to the control in a degree most difficult to define of another headquarters in Washington. Such an arrangement would, I believe, involve duplication between the two headquarters, confusion as to their functions, a diffusion of responsibility, and friction between them. I strongly recommend that wherever it be located and however it be controlled and supported, the task force responsible for this Project have a clear responsibility for both operational planning and the actual conduct of operations, and that it be coherently organized with a clear and direct line of command running from its headquarters to its field detachments.

4. Within this basic principle, the following would appear to be the three feasible alternatives:

(a) The task force could be wholly controlled by the CIA but draw upon the Air Force for personnel and support.

(b) It could be a joint task force, jointly staffed and jointly controlled drawing upon elements of both CIA and the Air Force for support.

(c) It could be an Air Force task force drawing upon the CIA for support, especially for help in all those aspects of the Project which partake of the character of clandestine operations.

If alternative (c) is adopted, the task force could well be organized as an Air Division under the operational control of the Commander, SAC. The CIA could then assign personnel to this organization to perform such duties as the planning of suitable cover, the conduct of negotiations with the security services of other governments looking toward the acquisition of access to bases, and the monitoring of operations for conformity with clandestine practice. To insure effective support by CIA to such an Air Force unit and to enable the DCI to give it such policy guidance as might be appropriate, a very small staff unit would probably be necessary in the CIA. Likewise if alternative (a) were adopted a small special staff would be required in the Air Force to insure support to the CIA Project Organization and to monitor its activities as appropriate on behalf of the Air Staff.

TOP SECRET

-4-

5. If the decision is in favor of a joint task force, alternative (b), certain other decisions must be made as to (a) the manner in which the organization will be jointly controlled by the CIA and the Air Force and (b) the arrangements for its support, especially by the Air Force. With respect to the first of these problems it is generally agreed that one of the two senior officers of the task force should be designated by the DCI and the other by the Chief of Staff, or the Commander, SAC, or other appropriate authority in the Air Force. Although for internal operational matters one of these individuals must be the Senior Project Officer and the other must be his Deputy, the concept of joint control clearly requires that the Deputy have the right and the duty of keeping his principals informed of the progress of the Project, calling to their attention actual and prospective issues requiring policy determination, and seeking policy guidance from them. Thus, the individual would be for internal purposes the Deputy Director of the Project but would also represent the policy views of his Service. As to arrangements for support, it is clear that no joint task force can be given a blank check in the form of unlimited authority to call for personnel, services, and materiel from either CIA or the Air Force. What can be done is to arrive at agreed staffing levels and estimates of requirements for supporting services and material and then to place responsibility for providing support in accordance with these requirements either at one central point in each parent Service or at several points as may be appropriate. Within the Air Force a possible arrangement would be to place the major responsibility for support upon an operational command (presumably SAC) and to establish under the Chief of Staff a small unit to arrange for specialized support that could not appropriately be provided by the designated operational command. Such an arrangement will not, of course, solve in advance the problem of dealing with urgent, unforeseen requirements. But there is, I submit, no form of organization that will solve such problems in advance. When critical unforeseen needs arise, the task force (wherever it is constituted) will initially seek to have the need met through established support channels. If the need turns out to compete with other top-priority requirements, the conflict can only be resolved at a very high level. These facts of life are not much affected by the location of the task force or even by the assignment of support responsibility.

6. Recommendations: It is recommended that, as a matter of urgency, decisions be made as follows:

a. That the Project will be entrusted to an integrated task force with clear and direct internal lines of command (consistent with the requirement that all military personnel be under the military command of the senior Air Force Officer assigned to the task force).

TS-103613
Copy 2 of 6

-5-

b. That the task force be either controlled by the CIA, or jointly controlled by the CIA and the Air Force, or formed as an element of the Air Force.

c. That if it is not to be an element of the Air Force, Air Force support will be provided to the task force through designated channels.

d. That if it is to be a jointly controlled task force, the mechanism of control shall be that outlined in paragraph 5 above, or some other as may be agreed.

SIGNED

RICHARD M. BISSELL, JR.
Special Assistant to the Director

TS-103613
Cy 2 of 6